

# BALBOA PARK PARKING & CIRCULATION DISCUSSION

March 2021



**FRIENDS OF BALBOA PARK**  
Jack Carpenter, René Smith, Task Force Co-Chairs

# PURPOSE

## **Goal**

To identify potential P&C partial solutions

## **Request**

A determination by P&R on implementing any of these solutions

## **Next Steps**

Should P&R favor any of these recommendations, Friends of Balboa Park will work closely with appointed staff to develop implementation plans

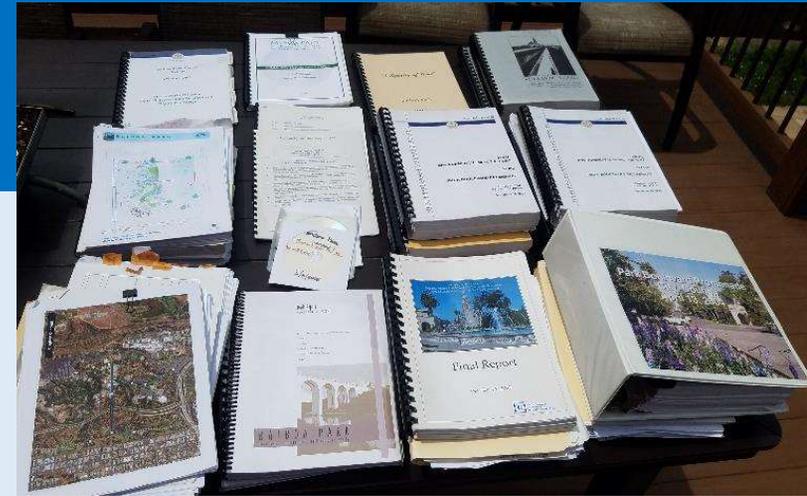


# BACKGROUND

For decades, various studies have analyzed these issues for Balboa Park.

In 2019, Friends volunteered to take a leadership role in studying solutions to the Park's parking and circulation problems by establishing a working group of Parks & Recreation and park organizations' leadership.

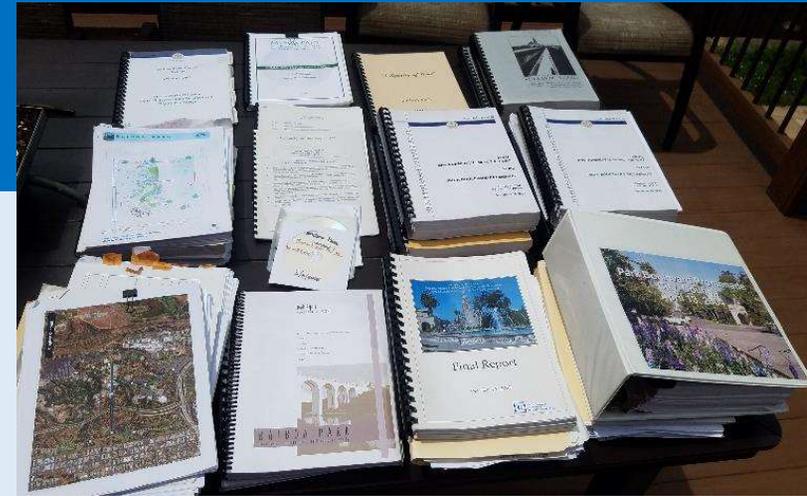
Knowing that “everything is connected”, we purposely opted to: focus on the achievable to obtain “small victories”; be alert to the Balboa Park “Framework for the Future”; and, assist in developing transition strategies to the medium and longer term.



# BACKGROUND (CONT.)

Over several months, with inclusive attendance at two stakeholder meetings, Discovery and Research & Analysis phases were completed.

***We are now ready to move to the Implementation Phase.***



# CONTRIBUTORS

## TASK FORCE CO-CHAIRS

**Jack Carpenter**  
Friends of Balboa Park, FAIA

**René Smith**  
US Navy (Ret.)

---

**John Bolthouse**  
Friends of Balboa Park

**Vicki Estrada**  
Estrada Land Planning

**Micah Parzen**  
Museum of Us

**Peter Comiskey**  
Balboa Park Cultural Partnership

**Tomas Herrera-Mishler**  
Balboa Park Conservancy (formerly)

**Melissa Peterman**  
Comic-Con Museum

**Charlie Daniels**  
Parks & Recreation Department

**Mario Llanos**  
Parks & Recreation Department

**David Rice**  
San Diego Zoo Global, FAIA

**Pete Ellsworth**  
Legler Benbaugh Foundation

**David Marshall**  
Friends of Balboa Park, AIA, NCARB

**Roger Showley**  
Committee of One Hundred

## SUPPORT

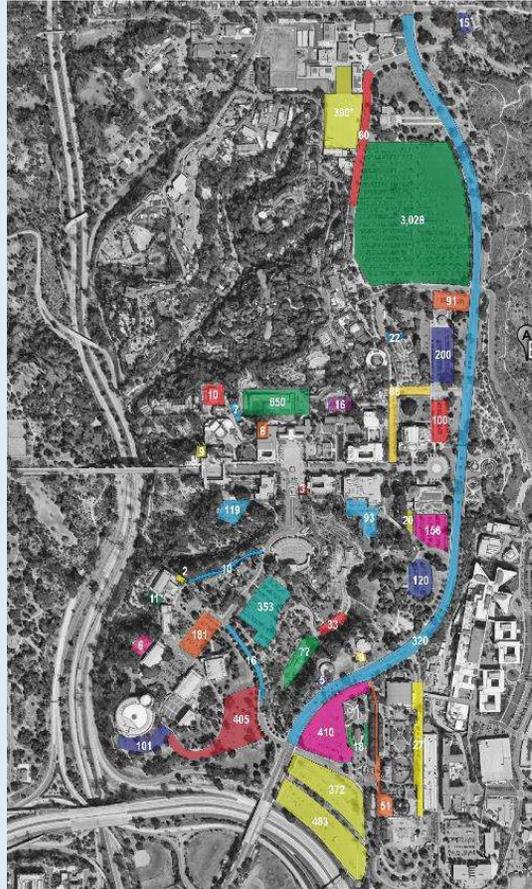
**Ron Buckley**   **George Franck**   **Alan Hoffman**   **Neil Larson**   **Alan Nevin**   **Jennifer Padilla**   **Robert Thiele**

# RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

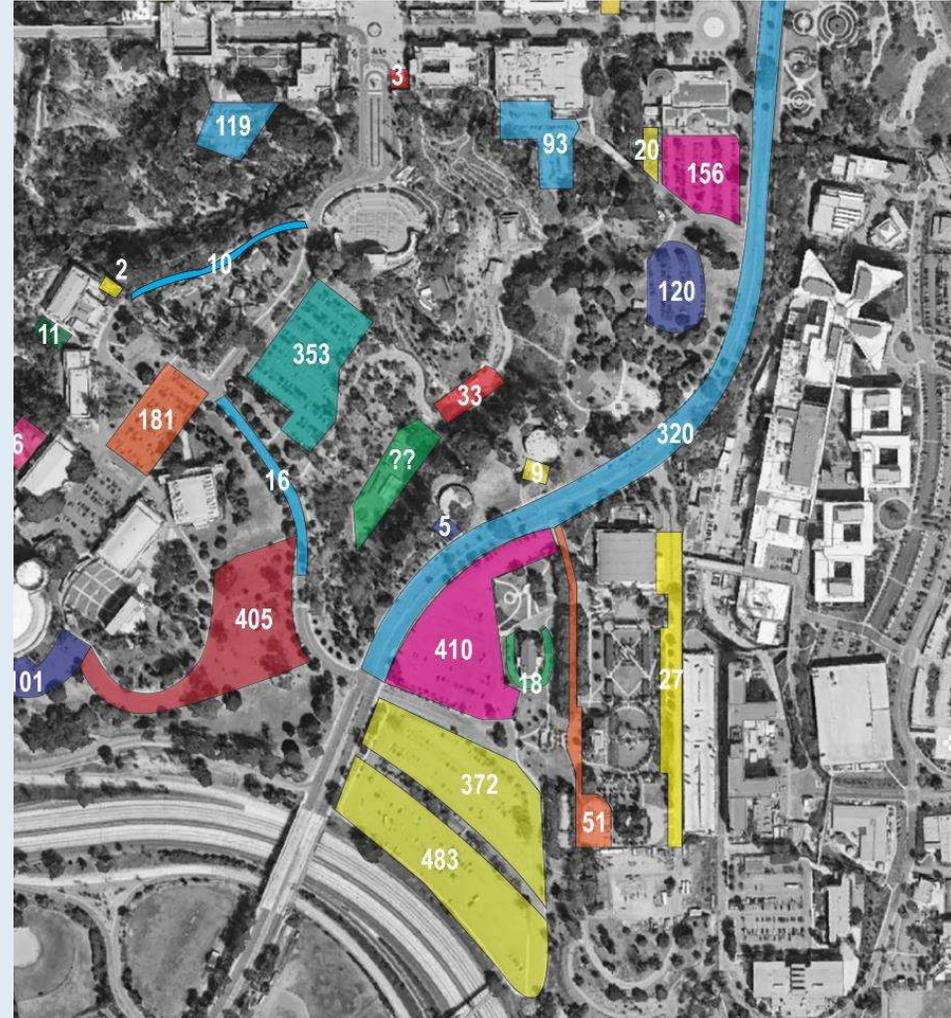


# BALBOA PARK PARKING SPACE COUNT – CENTRAL MESA (2021)

Various  
restrictions apply



South of El Prado







# BALBOA PARK PARKING AND CIRCULATION DECISION TREE

- **"Low-hanging fruit"**  
EXAMPLE: Stay tuned – coming shortly
- **"Mid-hanging fruit"**  
EXAMPLE: Improve and expand transportation options to and within the Park
- **"High-hanging fruit"** (not achievable in the near term)  
EXAMPLE: New parking garage(s)



# CURRENT STATUS

- Much of this research was done prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Caveats:
  - The recession may attract large numbers of vehicle-supported tourists from nearby population centers looking for an inexpensive alternative to a vacation on a cruise ship or airplane.
  - Also, there may be increased use by locals driving and avoiding any public transportation and shared ride services coupled with a resurgence of interest post-pandemic.
- We present all potential important projects but recommend initiating efforts on the “low hanging fruit.”

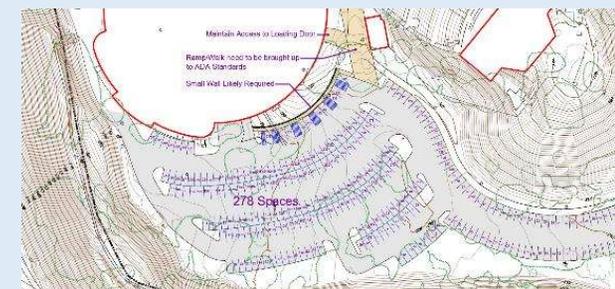
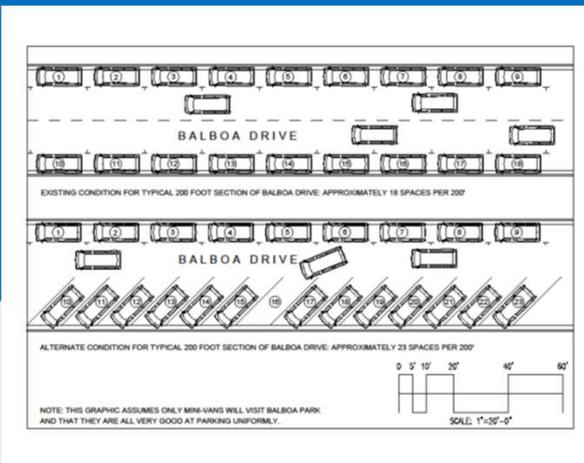
# LOW-HANGING FRUIT

Achievable within three years

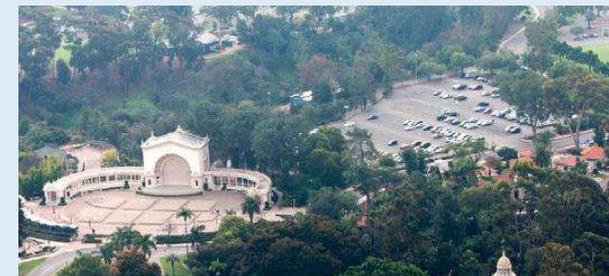


# UPGRADING EXISTING LOTS

- **Restripe Balboa Drive** into diagonal spaces that could add over 100 spaces
- **Restripe/pave additional spaces in the Federal Lot**
- **Restripe lot behind Spreckels Lot** (consider diagonal parking with reduced lanes and reduced number of disabled spaces) and behind (to west of) Starlight Bowl
- **Expand parking behind the Air & Space Museum**



Additional parking spaces



# PARKING CONTROL

- **Revisit changing *No Parking* hours** to end at 9:00 AM on select Central Mesa parking lots to discourage downtown vehicular parking:
  - Candidate parking lots: Federal, Pepper Grove, Spreckels, Fleet, Spanish Village, Natural History
- **Change parking in the Alcazar and Casa de Balboa lots** to permit only and increase Handicap parking spaces

# PARKING CONTROL (CONT.)

- Pursue the installation of **variable-pricing "smart" parking meters:**
  - On the East side of Sixth Avenue between Date and Upas Street
  - On Park Boulevard between Interstate 5 and Upas Street

Ensure that **all net revenues are devoted to parking and circulation projects in Balboa Park**



## Candidate locations in Balboa Park:

- East side of Sixth Avenue between
- Date and Upas Street
- Park Boulevard between Interstate 5 and Upas Street

# Add Vehicular Pick-up / Drop-Off Locations

- **Designate certain areas for Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) such as Uber/Lyft** ride-sharing pickup and drop-off
- **Possible locations**
  - Between Comic-Con Museum (Federal Building) and Municipal Gym in North Palisades
  - West Prado between Sixth Avenue and Cabrillo Bridge
  - Village Place at Globe Way
  - Alcazar Garden lot
  - Plaza de California

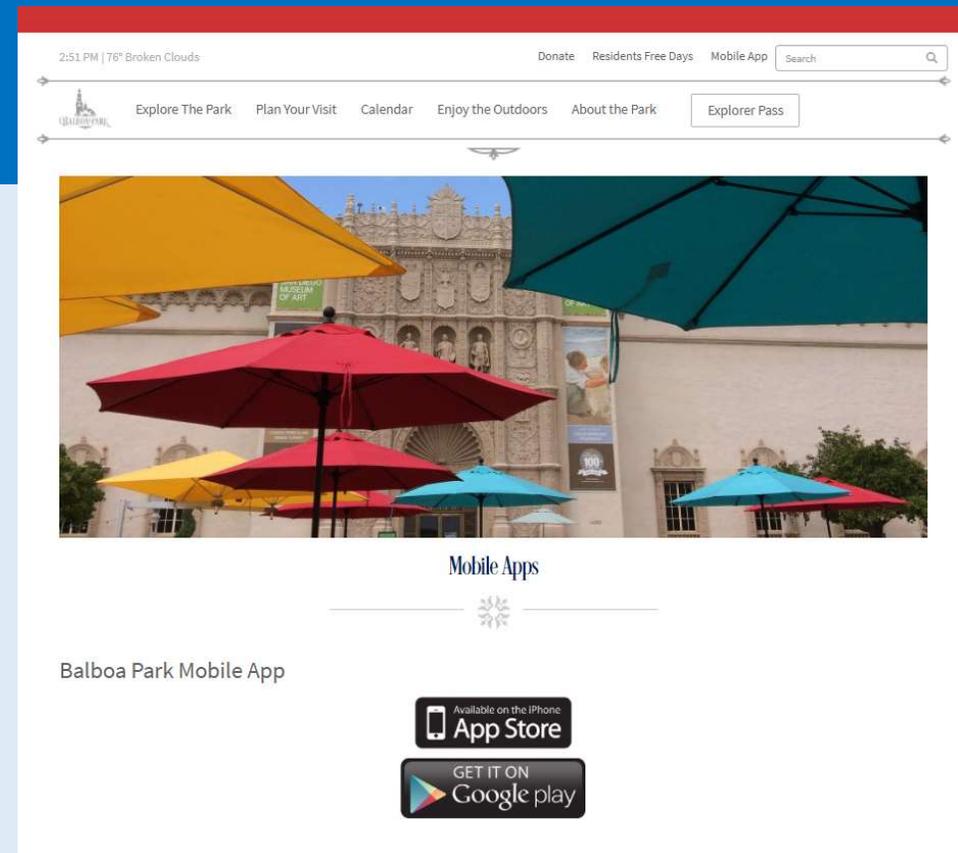
# Park Lighting and Safety

- There is a direct connection between lighting, safety and the sense of security that will bring more visitors to the park at night which will reduce crime.
- Comic-Con and other attractions intend to expand their hours into the evening time.
- Good, safe levels of lighting between attractions will improve safety.
- There is a detailed 1997 Lighting analysis plan for the Central Mesa that is a building block for incremental improvements.



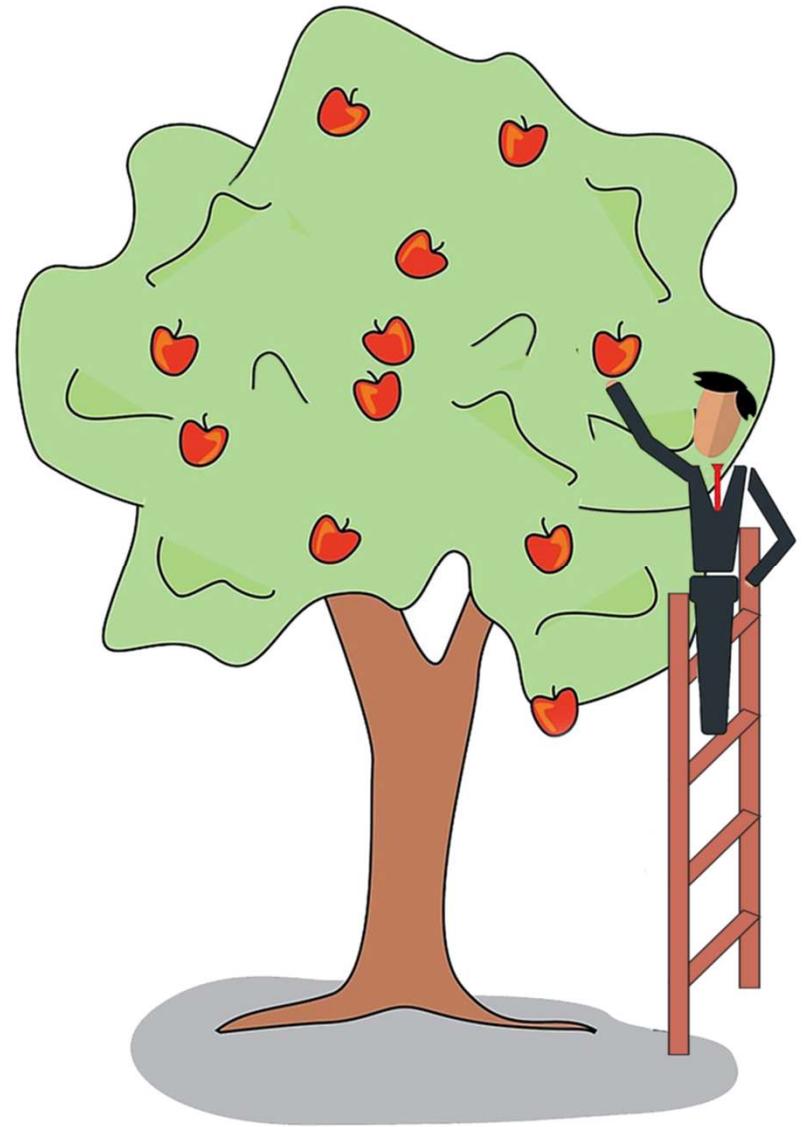
# Improved Visitor Parking Information

- **Install sensors** in parking lots
- **Expand and improve the Balboa Park website** and APP to reflect the above new information
- **Better accommodate** new computers and smart phones for finding available parking
- Facilitate use by **hotel concierges**



# MEDIUM-HANGING FRUIT

Mid-term solutions achievable in 3 to 5 years



# Discourage Lot Use by Non-Park Users

- **Discourage use of Inspiration Point lots by:**
  - Downtown workers;
  - Naval Hospital patients, personnel;
  - Students, faculty and staff at San Diego High School and City College
- Could include **time limits** and **parking permits**



# Improve and Expand Park Shuttle Service

- **Expand intrapark shuttle routes to**
  - West Mesa
  - San Diego Zoo
  - East Mesa
  - Downtown parking lots and garages including SDHS and SDCCD.
- **Introduce pedestrian and handicap-friendly shuttle service** on the Prado serving all the park's cultural institutions
- Must be driven by **outside funding sources**



# Better Community Access

- **Better park signage** for wayfinding, landmark and parking
- **Extend FRED** free shuttles to the park
- Institute specially branded **MTS bus service to Balboa Park**
- Obtain definitive information regarding **transportation needs and uses by underserved communities**



# Employee & Volunteer Parking

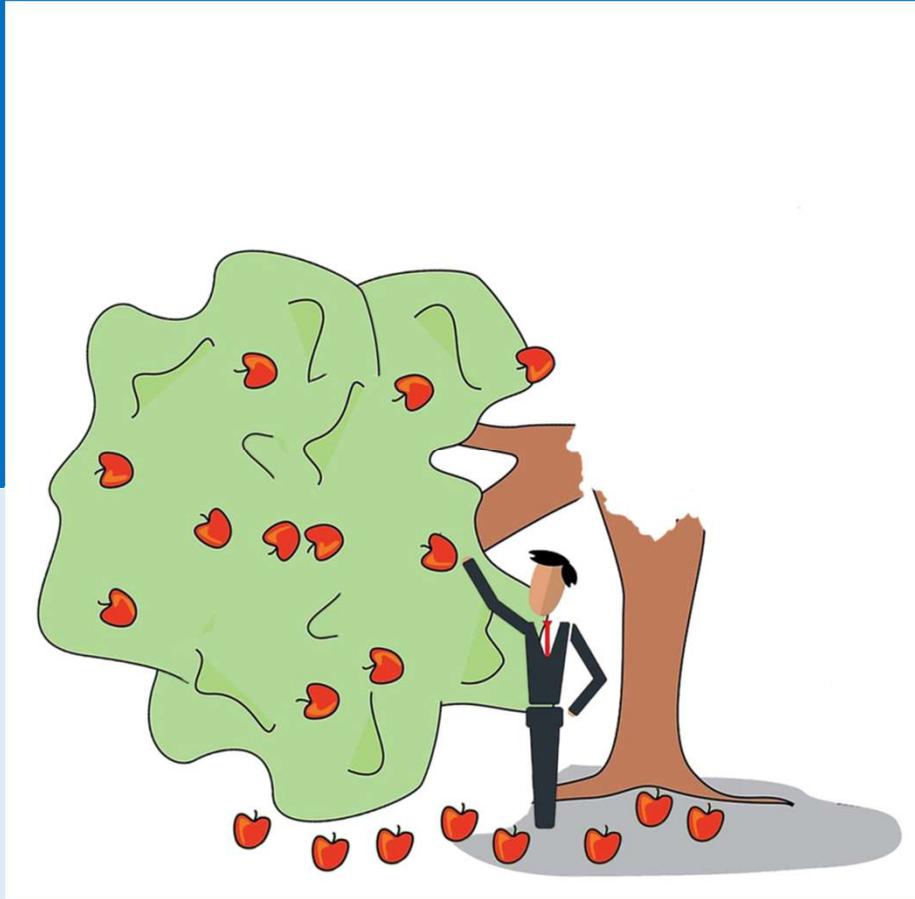
Require park institution employees and volunteers to park at non-prime lots by providing sufficient shuttle service and security



# LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

Achievable beyond 5 years

The world of transportation is fluid, dynamic. We only need look at the past 10 years of change to realize the humility needed to forecast the next 10, 20 or more years.



# LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

- Garages
  - Approved – Spreckels lot and Promenade
  - Conceptual – Gold Gulch, Federal Lot or Inspiration Point
- Improve Park Access
  - Cover sections of I-5 – “freeway lids”
  - Install a Balboa Park Trolley Line
  - Create the Nolen Parkway and improve 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue
  - Install a bridge to the East Mesa
  - Complete the Gateways project

*Thank you*

# **Background Information**

# LOW-HANGING FRUIT

## *Discussion*



**MEDIUM-HANGING FRUIT**  
***Questions?***





AUTOMOBILE DAY IN THE GROUNDS

### **Balboa Park Parking, Parking Management and Circulation References**

Type/Name	Date	Approved?	Location
<b>Official City of San Diego Documents</b>			
<b>Jones &amp; Jones</b>			
BP Master Plan Update / J&J comments	2002		San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation. Notes and Comments. Mike Stepner. November 7, 2002.
Discovery Report	2003		<a href="https://friendsofbalboapark.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/balboa-park_discovery-phase-white-paper-2003.pdf">https://friendsofbalboapark.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/balboa-park_discovery-phase-white-paper-2003.pdf</a> August, 2003
Findings & Options White Paper	2003		<a href="https://friendsofbalboapark.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/jonesjones.whitepaper_2003-9_opt.pdf">https://friendsofbalboapark.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/jonesjones.whitepaper_2003-9_opt.pdf</a>
Preliminary Draft Plan	2003		Public Forum 3. October 3, 2003. Detailed Presentation materials.
BP Transit/Shuttle/Parking Mgt Workshop	2003		December 18, 2003. Source unknown. [Note: includes discussion bus ridership information as well as surface parking and tram information.]
Balboa Park land use, circulation, and parking study, Final Report Jones & Jones	2004		Discovery report: <a href="https://c100.org/resources/jones%26jones.whitepaper_2003-8_opt.pdf">https://c100.org/resources/jones%26jones.whitepaper_2003-8_opt.pdf</a> <a href="https://friendsofbalboapark.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/balboa-park-land-use-circulation-parking-study_jones-_jones-2004.pdf">https://friendsofbalboapark.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/balboa-park-land-use-circulation-parking-study_jones-_jones-2004.pdf</a> See White Paper and Appendices at same site
Appendices	2004		<a href="https://friendsofbalboapark.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/jones-jones-2004-study-appendices.pdf">https://friendsofbalboapark.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/jones-jones-2004-study-appendices.pdf</a> Summary of previous plans and transportation analysis particularly germane.
Balboa Park land use, circulation, and parking study, City Report to the Planning Commission	2004	Yes	Report No. PC-04-042. February 11, 2004
Letter to Planning Commission, Re: Jones & Jones study	2004	No	Hecht Solberg Robinson Goldberg Bagley, November 8, 2004. San Deigo Zoo Employee Parking lot. Richmond Street location. Neighbor noise concerns.
Balboa Park land use, circulation, and parking study, City Report to the Planning Commission	2004		Report No. PC-04-085. November 18, 2004. Notes: (1) Generally corresponds with initial DRAFT Project Definition, April 29, 2004; (2) Next step was for Planning Commission to initiate amendments to the various plans. I do not see further action by Planning Commission. <b>Investigate further.</b>
<b>Tilghman &amp; Civitas</b>			
BP Parking Mgt Action Plan	2005		Apparently a product of BP Cultural Partnership, October 6, 2005. [Next steps included: Complete employee survey update and confirm Naval Hospital demand.
User Survey Report	2007		BPCP analysis. Morey Group. Funded by Legler Benbough & SD Foundation. [Note: Overwhelmingly positive results regarding visitor satisfaction. Conflicting desires- more parking and more park space.

**PRIOR  
STUDIES**

## PRIOR STUDIES (CONT.)

<b>Soul of San Diego</b>			
The Future of Balboa Park: Funding, Management and Governance, Balboa Park Committee.	2008		See below: Soul of San Diego report
Soul of San Diego Report Full report and abbreviated report	2008		<a href="https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/park-and-recreation/pdf/bptf/1.thesoulofsandiego-january2008.pdf">https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/park-and-recreation/pdf/bptf/1.thesoulofsandiego-january2008.pdf</a> <a href="https://balboaparkconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/The-Future-of-Balboa-Park.pdf">https://balboaparkconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/The-Future-of-Balboa-Park.pdf</a>
<b>Balboa Park Plans</b>			
Plaza de Panama Project			
PdP Parking Structure Project	2011		Rick Engineering letter. March 15, 2011. [Note: Detained information regarding structure, parking, trams, circulation
PdP Final EIR	2012		<a href="https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/dsderp_pts233958_02.pdf">https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/dsderp_pts233958_02.pdf</a>
PdP Final EIR Addendum	2016	Yes	<a href="https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/dsderp_pts516820_01.pdf">https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/dsderp_pts516820_01.pdf</a>
Central Mesa Precise Plan	1922	Yes	<a href="https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/planning/programs/parkplanning/.pdf">https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/planning/programs/parkplanning/.pdf</a> Note: Appendixes only available in paper copy currently
Zoo Promenade Plans			
Balboa Park Master Plan	1992		<a href="https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/bpmasterplan_0.pdf">https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/bpmasterplan_0.pdf</a> [Note that there are various amendments to the Master Plan through 2012 relating to Zoo Promenade and Plaza de Panama.]
East Mesa Precise Plan	1993	Yes	Note: report only available in paper copy currently
Inspiration Point Precise Plan DRAFT	1998	No	Note: report only available in paper copy currently
<b>Balboa Park &amp; Other Organization Documents</b>			
Parking Data of Value	2002		MacLeod Consulting Services Report – presentation notes to BP Committee August 1, 2002. [Note: Unable to determine anything further about the source and use of this effort at this time.]
Balboa Park Benefits Study, September, 2017, Balboa Park Conservancy and San Diego State University.	2017		<a href="https://balboaparkconservancy.org/project/economic-impact-study/">https://balboaparkconservancy.org/project/economic-impact-study/</a>
Economic and Fiscal Impacts of Zoo and Wild Animal Park on San Diego Regional Economy	2003		Prepared for San Diego County Taxpayers Assn by CIC research, Inc., August 26, 2003
San Diego Zoo Final Economic & Fiscal Study	2018		<a href="https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5af07fd050a54f8fc370c748/t/5b593f7503ce645f31d837b7/1532575610050/201805+Final+Zoo+Economic+Impact+Study.pdf">https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5af07fd050a54f8fc370c748/t/5b593f7503ce645f31d837b7/1532575610050/201805+Final+Zoo+Economic+Impact+Study.pdf</a>
BP Community Forum White Paper	2002		BP Millennium Society, The Umbrella Committee. Our Heritage, Our Resource, Our Future, Our Stewardship

## PRIOR STUDIES (CONT.)

Governing Urban Park Conservancies	2009		A Review of Board Structure and Roles at Six Major City Park Conservancies. October, 2009. Funded by Legler Benbough Foundation
Linking the Park to the Bay	2008		Univ. of Okla & New School of Arch+ Design. Mike Stepner
<b>Publications</b>			
The High Cost of Free Parking, Donald Shoup, 2005, Planners Press, Chicago, IL	2005	N/A	San Diego Public Library
Design with Nature	1969		Ian L. McHarg, Doubleday & Co, Garden City, NY. San Diego Library Circuit
The RSVP cycles: creative processes in the human environment	1969		Lawrence Halprin, George Brazilier, N.Y., N.Y. San Diego Library Circuit
Parking Best Practices	2011		A review of zoning regulations and policies in select US and International Cities, NYC Dept. of City Planning, Transportation Division, 2011
Regional Parking Management Toolbox			SANDAG, Kimley Horn, Date unknown but post 2013.

### Extractions and Comments from Various Reports

#### Official City of San Diego Documents

Balboa Park land use, circulation, and parking study, City Report to the Planning Commission 2004 Yes Report No. PC-04-042.

Appendix A, p. ii: Plans for the Zoo expansion indicate an increase in attendance of 33% by year 2020.

p.xiii: "... report clear and repeated incidents where the lack of transit access and the current lack of parking are a regular limitation on the use and scheduling of cultural and recreational activities."

p. xx: "The Planning Commission will be the only advisory body to take any action on this Study, in the form of authorization to initiate plan amendments." [MAKES ONE WONDER WHAT HAPPENED THEN.]

Attachment: Discovery Phase White Paper, p.6: Picture of Todd Gloria participating in the Workshop. [IT IS SAFE TO ASSUME THAT WHEREVER AM GLORIA WORKS NEXT, BALBOA PARK AND THE "LESSONS" OF THE 200-2006 STUDIES WILL BE ON HIS MIND.]

Balboa Park land use, circulation, and parking study, City Report to the Planning Commission 2004 Report No. PC-04-085. November 18, 2004.

P. 7 Recommendations in three groups. Longer term projects requiring further study and plan amendments. Anticipated to be completed within 10 years. Second group requires no plan amendments and smaller in scale require minimal or no additional funding. Short term 3 – 5 years. Third are longer term improvements will be addressed in future plan amendments.

## PRIOR STUDIES (CONT.)

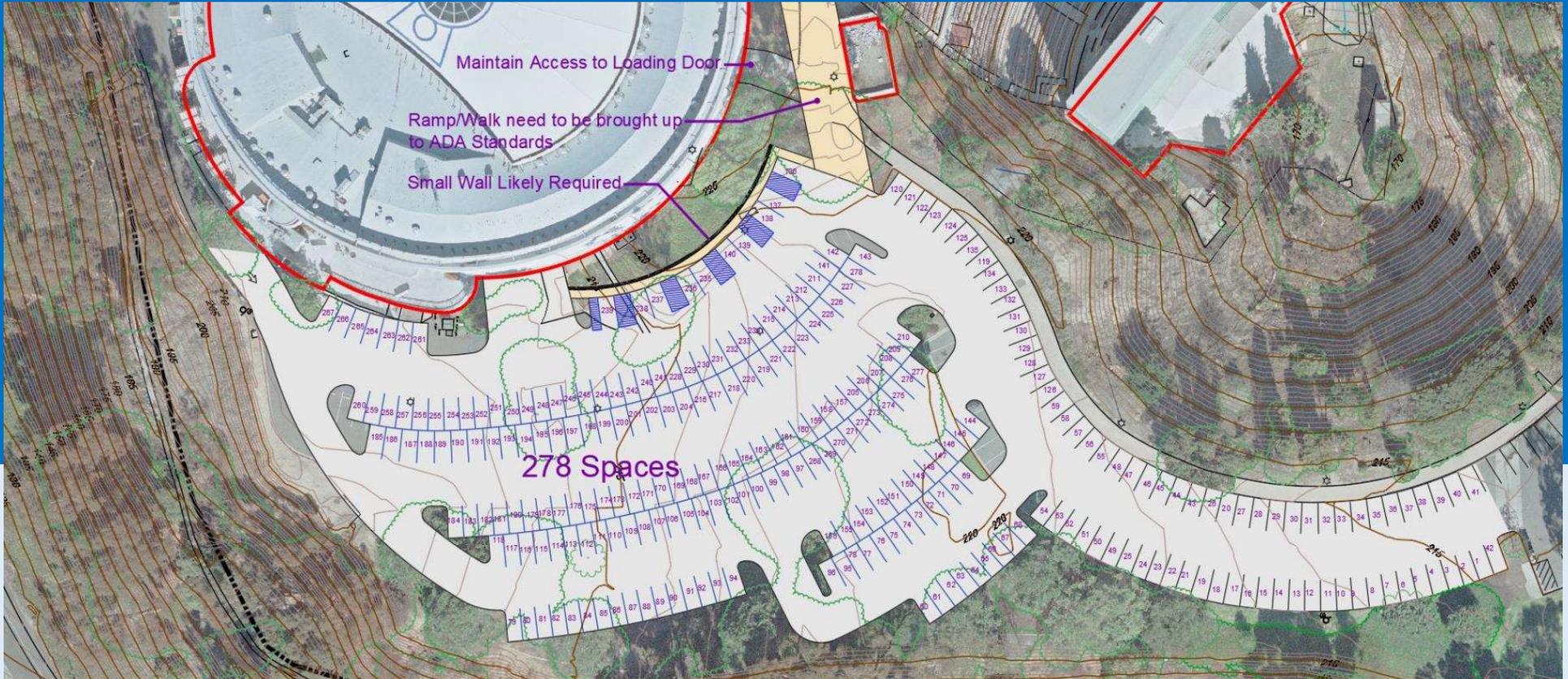
### Balboa Park Organizations Documents

BP Community Forum White Paper 2002

BP Millennium Society, The Umbrella Committee. Our Heritage, Our Resource, Our Future, Our Stewardship

C3 Participated with concerned citizens to present a path forward, including updating the Master and Precise Plans. Then CM Toni Atkins spoke at length... “like the governance; and certainly the master plan update; and whatever we decide to do in terms of traffic circulation; a zoo proposal... has to include parking and traffic circulation whether we talk about the organ pavilion and parking there ... I really don’t like to waste my time on plans that we’re not going to use ... maintenance and deferred maintenance and the revenue stream.” V, p.12, 15, 16, VI, 8.

“They found counter to people’s expectations, that every park that has eliminated cars has increased it’s safety and decreased its crime rate, because it turns out more people will be using the park if it’s less dominated by cars. Peter Harnik [who was present], p.V,4.



Additional parking 97 more spaces

# LOW-HANGING FRUIT (CONT.)

We call this reachable “Low Hanging Fruit” – that which:

- Those efforts to undertake now to prepare for the next phase, “medium hanging fruit.”
- Can be achieved with minimal financial resources, capital impact on the park, delay, and by building support within the community.



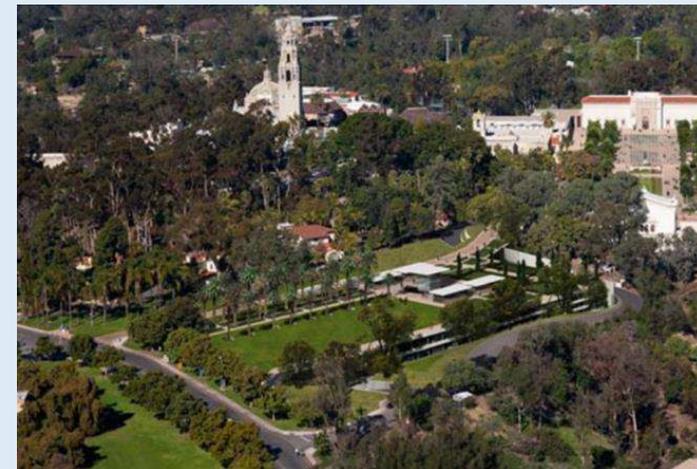
# LOW-HANGING FRUIT

- After several quality comprehensive reports with similar findings as ours, it is apparent that funding sources, community support and political will and leadership remain a major hurdle in accomplishing the needed changes for parking and circulation in Balboa Park.
- The items that make impact on parking and circulation that cost less and are less constrained.



# Garages

- Build the **approved** garage beneath **Spreckels lot**, and/or
- Build the **approved** underground parking garage at the **Promenade**, the initial plans for which have been funded by the San Diego Zoo, and/or...
- Build what are currently **conceptual** garages in Gold Gulch, Federal lot, and/or Inspiration Point



# Improve Park Access

- **Cover sections of Interstate 5** to reconnect the park to downtown and use some of the space for parking garages and usable parkland (“freeway lids”);
- **Install a “Balboa ParkTrolley Line,”** either rail or rubber-tired, between the downtown (San Diego Convention Center?) and Balboa Park;



# Improve Park Access (Cont.)

- Improve park access by the Nolen Parkway and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- Extend access to the East Mesa via El Prado with **new footbridge**;
- **Accommodate surge parking** on the East Mesa.
- Strengthen the image of the Park with completion of the **Gateway Project**.

